

A CAVALRY MELEE.

THE CHARGE OF SCARLETT'S THREE HUNDRED AT BALAKLAVA.

Fearlessly Led, the Line of British Troopers Worned its Way into the Midst of Three Thousand Russian Horsemen—A Wild and Startling Encounter.

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ON THE hills of Chersonesus many times 10,000 soldiers of the allied army of besiegers at Sevastopol looked down upon the valley leading from the Russian stronghold to the harbor of Balaklava on the morning of Oct. 25, 1854. As spectators from the galleries of a theater, leaning breathlessly forward to catch every detail of some grand drama enacted on the stage below, the warlike, bearded English and French, drawn to the scene by the commingled roar of tramping hoofs and battle shout, strained neck and eye to follow the quick impetuous movements of the friends, the cool and masterful tactics of their foes, upon the bare and sloping hillside skirting the valley on the north. Over the crest and down the slope in fine battle array, with ardor exulting in the success of preliminary conflict, the joy of incidental victories, massive columns of Russian cavalry, of artillery and of infantry to the number of 25,000, swept resolutely onward, aiming at the heart of the allied camp. In their path, as they marched every hostile redoubt, every battery and every outpost detachment was ridden down with the remorseless force, the pitiless slaughter, of an avalanche. The booming of cannon captured by the Russians and turned upon enemies, the scattering rifle shots of clouds of Cossack skirmishers speeding in front of the grand columns of the czar's leaves whirling in an autumn blast, told the whole story to the startled watchers on the hilltops. The Russians had caught the allies unawares by an early morning surprise. Pickets and advance batteries had been overpowered and wiped out, and their conquerors, still unopposed, were entering the borders of the camping ground of the outpost reserve. Lord Leuven's cavalry division of 1,500 men, comprising the Heavy Brigade of General Scarlett and Lord Cardigan's Light Brigade, stood to horse among their half dismantled tents, lastly formed squadrons and wheeled into line of battle to accept the sudden challenge to combat.

Imagine yourself one of the favored spectators of a struggle of which the participants brought away no memory beyond the confused notion of a rush and a melee. In front of a handful of British horsemen toward the Russian side General Scarlett is in saddle, with Lieutenant Elliott, a staff officer of his brigade, by his side and an orderly and a bugler a few paces behind. Three heavy squadrons are within 30 paces of the general's group, standing and dressing the line in a sort of a mark time movement, awaiting orders to march. The Russian army is hidden from view by an intervening curtain of ridges, and the British only know that something is coming and they are to meet it. Suddenly Lieutenant Elliott turns his eye toward the crest above and beholds the sky line fretted with the shining points of countless Russian lances. In another moment there bursts into view a solid mass of Russian cavalry numbering quite 3,000 men charging down the slope but 400 yards away. Elliott directs the eyes of his chief to the spectacle, and instantly, without stopping to count the advantage of delay or the risk of a charge, the intrepid brigadier gives the command, "Wheel into line!" Two squadrons of Scotch Greys and one of Inniskilling dragoons, six troops in all, numbering 300 braves, are within hearing of the order. They obey, and a few paces to the left bring them squarely in front of the center of the Russian column, which has changed its direction after passing the crest and is moving with the weight of thousands straight down the hillside. From the Chersonese heights the dark moving acres of gray Russian horsemen appear to be an immense landslide. So compact is the color that individuals are lost in the mass. For the moment, although other squadrons gather in support on the flank, "Scarlett's Three Hundred" march out alone to meet the wave of advancing spears. Scarlett, followed closely by Elliott, the bugler and the orderly, gallops ahead 50 paces in advance of his troopers, whose steel helmets and red coats form a brilliant mark on the brown landscape. Suddenly and mysteriously the Russian mass comes to a dead halt. Scarlett, still unmolested of the number of sabers that are within call, seizes the opportune moment to strike, turns partly in his saddle, and with a wave of the sword shouts to the Greys, who are nearest him, "Come on!" And on they go, the leader far ahead of his line, the aid, bugler and orderly at his heels.

A Russian officer of high grade sits calmly in the saddle, far in front of his column and at the center, the very spot toward which Scarlett aims his charge. The British on is moving with terrible speed, and the weight of his massive horse gives him a momentum that no single foe can hope to check. Scarlett's headress is a helmet, just like that of the bugler and the orderly, and the Greys, who in numbers are close at hand, while Elliott wears the cocked hat of a staff officer. The Russian officer, doubtless supposing that the cocked hat is a mark of a general and its wearer the leader of the assault, fixes his eye upon the aid and as Scarlett rides up turns his horse's head to give room, and thus allows the real chief to pass on without hindrance. Elliott dashes forward on the side of the Russian officer's sword arm, and the latter faces him and attempts to cut him down. Skillfully parrying the blows, the aid drives his weapon to the hilt in the Russian's body, his charger plunges ahead, and the swordsmen's grip is so strong as to turn the body of his antagonist around in the saddle by the leverage of the stout handle and blade. In an instant Elliott has his reeking steel free and is plunging on between the two nearest troopers, cleaving right and left. Beset on all sides, he wards off the assailants near him, and his horse, angered by the pressure of Russian horses on his flanks, lets fly his ironed hoofs right and left, clearing a space for action in the rear. Half a dozen Russian swordsmen are upon Elliott in front, and at a moment when he overreaches in parrying a thrust one foe man gives him a point in the forehead, another divides his face by a slashing blow, while a third cleaves through the cocked hat and deals a heavy blow on the top of the skull, and still another strikes the skull at the base behind the ears a powerful side blow that knocks the heroic fellow senseless. The bugler and trumpeter follow Elliott's example and how their way in the column toward their general, whose glittering helmet and

dazzling red coat shine above the struggling mass of black and gray.

The formation of the British troopers is changed in the hurried gallop from two ranks into one, each man and each charger seemingly anxious to be first. The love of fighting is rife in the Scotch and Irish breasts that throb beneath those red coats, and they plunge into the fray man for man as their leaders already have done. The front ranks of Russians, paralyzed no doubt at the boldness of the onslaught, open the spaces between files, and the Irish with a cheer and the Scots with an eager moan of joy spur on their horses and whirl their sabers madly in air, bringing them down on the heads nearest them as they pass on into the crush of animals and men. Soon the solid mass is broken up into knots, where a dozen Russians fall upon two or three Britons. The enraged Scots lay their sabers about them, but seeing that the Russian sabers are proof against the sword edge they seize their foe men by their long loose coats and drag them from the saddle. Bellowing like beasts, the Russians struggle to make room, and when a chance comes for a blow or thrust they give vent to their feelings by a fiendish "zizz" sounded through clenched teeth as lance and sword drive home. Like leader, like man, it is with the captain of squadrons in the gal-



LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT'S DEADLY SWOARD THROST.

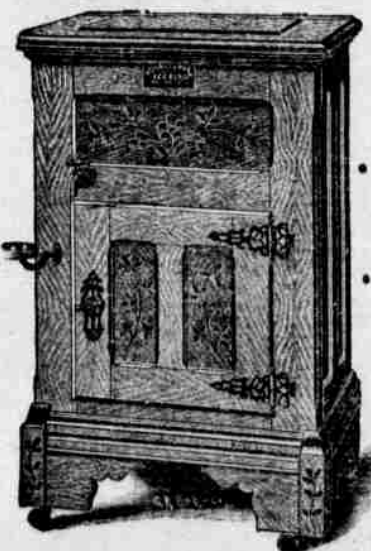
lant "Three Hundred." White of the Inniskilling rides ahead of the line, drives into the Russian column alone, and though a saber cut cleaves home to the skull through helmet and scalp he fights on, unconscious of the wound. Clarke of the Greys loses his bearings by a tilt of his charger and is seen riding on and fighting madly, his face streaming blood from a saber wound that has reached the skull. Colonel Griffith, also of the Greys, is stunned by a pistol wound in the head, but keeps the saddle. In all the mad fight Scarlett is still ahead, pushing on toward the Russian rear. A saber cut staves in his helmet, but stops short of the skull, and five other wounds leave enough life in the warrior to carry him diagonally through the Russian mass to the margin of its left flank. After him press the "Three Hundred," and avoiding the open beyond all turn and set back through the crush toward the front again. Suddenly above the flash and roar of the conflict are heard the ringing cheers of Scarlett's dragoons, hussars and the remainder of the Inniskillings. They have galloped hurriedly to the right and left, and in solid masses charge the Russian flanks. The Russian horsemen back off, their files loosen, the array dissolves; it breaks, and a formless herd is galloping back up the hillside, leaving Scarlett and his "Three Hundred" the battleground and the dead.

Eight minutes, as long as it takes a good walker to travel half a mile, was the length of Scarlett's ride forward and back through the Russian column. Eight minutes it was of the most marvelous cavalry fight on record. In all the fighting the Heavy Brigade lost 78 killed and wounded, the Russians over 500, and the casualties on both sides came from the melee of the "Three Hundred" in desperate clench with 3,000 light horsemen of the czar. It was the charge of Scarlett's "Three Hundred" which led to the disaster of the Light Brigade in the pass at a later hour. Orders to Lord Cardigan to support General Scarlett in his charge up the hillside never reached him, and as he sat biting his lip in chagrin because Scarlett's men had the post of honor he exclaimed: "Damn it! Those Heavies have the laugh on us today." Soon the order came for Cardigan's band to charge the batteries at the head of the pass, and all the world knows with what mad but wasted valor it was carried out.

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